



Thoughts on the Journey

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Nature often mirrors the spiritual dimension of our lives. When we step outside of ourselves and carefully observe nature, it can shed some light on the complex mysteries that are part of the Creator's design.

Long before the death and Resurrection of our Lord, ancient Egyptians and Greeks saw the similarity between the butterfly's cocoon and the burial wrappings of their mummies. They would place golden butterflies in their tombs to symbolize immortality, new life, and resurrection.

But, before we get to the "new life" and "resurrection" stage of the butterfly, we don't want to skip the all-important stage of the *struggle* that leads to new life.

Years ago, a family member admitted themselves to the Hazelden Rehabilitation Center in Minnesota for narcotics addiction. During their six week in-house program, the center offered a one-week opportunity for family members to come and participate in an effort to understand addiction and co-dependency. I attended the family program. It was there that I heard the butterfly story that made a profound impression on me. It goes like this:

A man found the cocoon of a butterfly and kept it. One day, a small opening appeared. The man observed the cocoon for several hours as the butterfly struggled to squeeze its body through the tiny hole. Then, it stopped as if it couldn't go any further. So, the man decided he would help the butterfly by taking small scissors and carefully snipping off the remaining bits of the cocoon. The butterfly emerged easily, but it had a swollen body and shriveled wings.

The man continued to watch it expecting that, at any minute, the wings would enlarge and expand enough to support its body: neither happened. The butterfly spent the rest of its short life crawling around, never able to fly.

Without the struggle, the emerging new butterfly lacks the strength to fly and embark on their new

journey in the world. Without this self-sustaining strength, it will perish quickly. It needs to struggle on its own.

We have spent the past 40 days of Lent in a spiritual chrysalis state of sorts. For the pupa, this is the transformation stage when tissues are broken down and the butterfly structures are formed. For we as Christians, this is also a time of transformation when we break down the parts of ourselves that are not of God and restructure our thinking. It's a time for renewing our spirit within. It is in the struggle, the prayer, the fasting, the almsgiving, that we pump new life into the wings of our faith so that we can be lifted from our darkness and rise to the joy of the Resurrection. It is in the struggle that we strengthen ourselves for new life.

Our second reading, on this Easter Sunday morning, is from St. Paul to the Colossians. Paul wrote this letter while he was in prison. He tells the people of Colossae:

"Brothers and sisters: If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory."

The Resurrected Christ is still with us and He wants us to spread our wings and celebrate His victory over death. Jesus also wants us to continue on the path of conversion. Lent was a good start, but it doesn't stop there. We are called to continue the good work that was started in us, making every effort to bring about the inner changes to become better disciples. Transformation and conversion requires that we turn our heads and hearts away from the negative distractions of this world and *seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father.*

Our life is with Christ. Focus on what is above. It is there with Him, that He will strengthen us as we persist in our struggle to be more like Him. He will lead us to Easter joy forever! Alleluia!!